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ABSTRACT

The last of a 3-part series, this handbook is designed to assist counselors in helping the American Indian student transfer successfully from a 2-year community college to a 4-year college or university. Section I characterizes the American Indian transfer student as being older than the average transfer student, likely to have a spouse and family, likely to be leaving a home community or reservation for the first time, and having conflicts about his relationship as an Indian in the majority culture. Section II describes assistance the counselor can provide in the areas of admissions, financial aid, budgeting, housing, and career counseling. Section III emphasizes the importance of the attitudes of the counselor toward the transfer student, the powerful influence for success the counselor can have on the student, and the need to be straightforward and honest in communicating with the student. Section IV suggests ways the counselor can help the student handle discrimination. Section V recommends that counselors of Indian students be involved with the school's Indian Club or other organizations for Indian students on campus. The handbook also contains an annotated list of 8 documents, all available in microfiche and/or paper copy through the ERIC system, which counselors may find useful. (NEC)

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Continuing A College Education: A Guide for Counseling the American Indian Student

by

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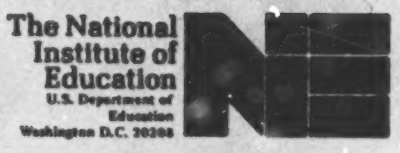

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

page

INTRODUCTION 1

Who is the American Indian transfer Student? 3
What specific help and advice can the Counselor provide to the Indian Student? 6
Admission and Financial Aids 6
Budget 7
Housing 7
Career Counseling 8
What should the attitude of the counselor toward the transfer student be? 9
How can the counselor help the student handle discrimination? 11
What should the counselor's involvement in the American Indian Club be? 12

USEFUL MATERIAL FROM ERIC 15
ABOUT THE AUTHOR 18

INTRODUCTION

This handbook was developed to assist counselors in helping the American Indian student transfer successfully from a 2-year community college to a 4-year college or university. To accomplish this, three handbooks were developed for use by:

-the student

-the parents (family)

-the counselor

This handbook should be considered as a beginning point and will provide information that will assist the counselor in obtaining more specific information. The handbook consists of five sections which answer the following questions:

Who is the American Indian transfer student?

What specific help and advice can the counselor provide to the Indian student?

What should the attitude of the counselor be toward the Indian student?

How can the counselor help the student handle possible discrimination?

What should the counselor's involvement in the American Indian Club be?

The counselor should become familiar with all three handbooks in order to provide advice and assistance.

Attending a 4-year college or university presents many challenges for the transfer student. To help the student to meet these challenges, as a freshmen or as a transfer student, many colleges have recognized the need to have a counselor for Indian students, or at least to have some person who is assigned to work specifically with Indian students. The role of this counselor is very diverse because of the nature of the problems Indian students encounter when they attend a 4-year institution for the first time.

The last pages of this handbook contain an annotated list of documents, all available in microfiche and/or in paper copy through the ERIC system, which counselors may find useful.

Who is the American Indian transfer student?

Indian students who have successfully completed work at a 2-year community college have, for the most part, remained in or near their home community or reservation for most of their lives. In recent years, transfer students have been found to be older than the average student entering the junior year of college. Transfer students may often have a spouse and family. Indian transfer students will be leaving a place of secure identity and entering one where that identity will need to be reestablished. The identification of a person as Indian is often confusing, even to Indians as individuals. This identification may have an effect on the financial aid they receive, as well as other services which may be available to them.

Tribal identity is important to most Indian persons. This identity may include being: a member of a "federally-recognized tribe"; a member of a state-established tribe (or reservation); a member of a tribe which has had its relationship with the federal government terminated; or a member of a tribe that did not sign a treaty with the U.S. Government and therefore is not recognized by the federal or any state government. There are also Indians who are descendants of tribal members who escaped on the Trail of Tears, escaped when the tribe was being forced onto a reservation, were relocated in the 1950's for employment purposes, or were adopted by non-Indians. In addition, there is the problem of the student who may not fit into one of the above categories of being Indian. Many Indian people are not eligible for Bureau of Indian Affairs assistance. The counselor should carefully check the eligibility requirements of various programs for which Indians may apply, so as to not mislead

the student. These and many other circumstances cause much confusion to personnel at colleges and universities where Indian students desire to attend.

In addition to the question of tribal membership, there are Indians who are considered to be traditionalists; they have chosen to follow the old ways of the medicine man and have a traditional Indian belief system. There are also those who are called moderates. They participate in the old way through powwows and attend various celebrations, but also take part in the majority culture and make it their own. Often they will leave behind the traditional Indian belief system. Finally, some have chosen to find success within the majority society and desire to live as successful people do within that society. The counselor will need to know and try to understand all three. Transfer students will have many conflicts about the three degrees of mixing into majority society as they pursue their education.

What specific help and advice can the Counselor provide to the Indian Student?

Admission and Financial Aids

College paperwork can be a major barrier to success within that system. The counselor should work closely with students from the time they request admission, to insure that the proper paper work is completed on time. The counselor should also be available to assist the student in identifying and applying for financial aids. The counselor who is well informed of the experience Indian students have in moving into a college area will be able to insure that students receive sufficient financial aid. Many students are on tribal or Bureau of Indian Affairs scholarships, and good communication with these agencies will be helpful in preventing late checks and other financial problems. The counselor must also be aware that some students are playing games by

aware that some students are playing games by getting a free ride financially for five or six months. Identification of these students and counseling for them can put an end to that game, thus enabling other and more serious students to receive financial aid. This may also help these students realize that they are losing a tremendous opportunity, and may help them become serious students.

Budget

It is important for students to be able to control their own money and still have enough to live on until the end of the term. The counselor should be available to help the student set up a budget for the term.

Housing

This is another area in which the counselor often gets involved. The counselor needs to emphasize that housing is not readily available at

the last minute. Housing arrangements should be made well in advance of the beginning of the term. Counselors should have information on off-campus housing, such as names of apartments, location, and the amount of rent and deposit.

Career Counseling

Although many students entering their junior year of college have settled on their career choice, some have not. The counselor should be aware of the job market trends, and be able to discuss career plans with students and how these plans will fit into the job market. The counselor can also play a supportive role in students' long-range personal and career plans. Students may also need counseling by the academic advisor.

Students may need advice on professors, sequence of courses, and how many courses to take. The counselor may advise the student to take a light load the first term because of the many social and economic adjustments to be made. Class

point average should be topics the counselor can emphasize. In addition, the counselor should be available to advise and refer the student to other services offered by the college or the surrounding community, such as health care, legal aid, mental health clinics, and social services.

What should the attitude of the counselor toward the transfer student be?

The attitude of the counselor will have a great effect on a student's readiness to seek help and the counselor's ability to help the student. The continuing demonstration that the counselor has great expectations for each student can be a powerful influence toward success. Besides this confidence in the student's ability to complete the chosen coursework, there is the necessity for straightforward and honest answers about ability, chance of success, and barriers to success. These

are a part of the college experience, as well as realities after leaving college. The counselor should help the student recognize and prepare for these issues, because they will arise. While communicating with the Indian student, the counselor may attempt to be straightforward, only to find that the student did not receive the message. The counselor should be aware of various means of communication and look for signs of miscommunication or misunderstanding. A nod of the head may mean "I heard you and will think about it" rather than "I agree with you." If this seems to be happening, the counselor should give additional assurance that the student's thoughts and ideas are important, and that without them the counselor cannot be as effective and helpful as he or she should be.

How can the counselor help the student handle discrimination?

Discrimination exists in many forms, because every person has preferences. Some have been able to be unbiased in their actions and others have not. The feeling of being discriminated against is destructive. When students begin to feel that a professor, program or service discriminates against them, it can be devastating. If the students do not learn to identify real discrimination and learn what to do about it or how to handle it, they can only become discouraged. Students leaving a community college where everyone knows them, and going into a large 4-year institution, where they are not known as persons but known to the recordkeepers as numbers, may have feelings of being left out and discriminated against. In reality all students are treated this way. Because Indian students may have little contact with other students, they may not be aware that a professor treats all students

the same way, and may feel that a profesor is picking on them or ignoring them because they are Indian. If a case of actual discrimination exists, the student should be helped to overcome the results of such discrimination. Students should know the alternatives and be aware that when it comes to differences between students and professors, the student seldom wins. This does not mean they shouldn't present their case.

What should the counselor's involvement in the American Indian Club be?

If a counselor is specifically involved in counseling Indian students, he or she needs to be involved with the school's Indian Club, or with any other organization for Indian students on campus. This involvement can range from periodic participation to being the advisor of the club. A smooth relationship between the counselor and club

officials is necessary. If the club has a study lounge, the counselor should be a familiar figure there. Many students are better able to express themselves in these surroundings. A system of referral and consultation between the Indian Club advisor and the counselor will greatly strengthen the ability of both to serve students most effectively. If the counselor is responsible for the club, the organization can be used in conjunction with regular counseling activities to assist students in adjusting to the college.

Working with students in a recreational activity is also helpful. Playing softball, football, basketball and other sports after regular class hours and/or on weekends will help students to relax between study hours and alleviate some of the homesickness which Indian students usually experience. Regular meetings and pot-luck dinners may also help. Celebrations are also important! If there are traditional celebrations held nearby, Indian students should attend them as a group when possible. The club

should plan to have speakers who will challenge the students. Current issues of Indian country are of great interest to many of the students.

Students need to be involved in all planning for the club. It is important that the counselor remain an advisor and a helper in determining the club's activities.

For the new counselor who has not worked with an Indian Club before, or for counselors who want to develop an American Indian Club on their campus, the best way to obtain information would be to write to institutions that already have well-established Indian Clubs, such as Montana State University, New Mexico State University, North Dakota State University or Arizona State University. A specific address for the Indian Club or a general address for a Campus Activities Office can usually be found in each college's undergraduate catalog.

USEFUL MATERIAL FROM ERIC

Antell, W. Culture, psychological characteristics, and socioeconomic status in educational program development for Native Americans. Las Cruces, NM: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1974. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 092 264)

Good for background material on Indian students.

Burdin, J.L., & Reagan, M. Preparing school personnel for American Indians. Some exploratory questions and responses with an annotated bibliography. Washington, D.C.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, 1970. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 045 560).

Largely concentrated on elementary/secondary education, but a number of sections might be of general use for counselors, especially pp. 10-11 (special competencies and attitudes for those who work with Indian students) and section 3 of the bibliography (orientation programs intended for teachers of Indian students).

Collins, R. Counseling within an Indian adult basic education project. Paper presented at the National Conference of the Canadian Guidance and Counseling Association, Winnipeg, Canada, June 1973. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 113 612).

Gives good general guidelines on counseling American Indians.

Evans, W.H. American Indian student counselor handbook. Spearfish, ND: Black Hills State College, 1977. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 167 306).

Contains article reprints, ideas and suggestions from many counselors and non-counselors.

Farlow, B.A. An equal chance: Handbook for counseling Indian students. Stevens Point, WI: Wisconsin State University, 1971. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 050 364).

Intended for public school counselors in Wisconsin, but has good general sections (pp. 7-9, 12-18) on counseling the Indian student.

LaFromboise, T., & Dixon, D.N. American Indian perception of trustworthiness in a counseling interview. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, April 1980. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 184 801).

Deals with a study of high school student/counselor relationship; good on the attitudes from each that might be helpful or detrimental to the counseling relationship.

McDonald, A. Value conflicts as a cause for drop outs. Paper presented to the Native American Teacher Corps Conference, Denver, April 1973. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 073 899).

Lists and discusses the basic causes for the high rates at which American Indians drop out of college; good background material for counselors.

Thompson, T. (Ed.) The schooling of Native America. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education/The Teacher Corps, U.S. Office of Education, 1978. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 168 751).

Ten essays on American Indian students and their cultural and educational background; useful for counselors.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Carol J. Minugh, a member of the Gros Ventre Tribe, was raised on the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana, and attended school in Dodson, Montana. She moved to Hoquiam, Washington in her junior year of high school and graduated from Hoquiam High School. She continued her formal education after years of being a waitress, cook, mill worker, and real estate saleswoman, and raising her four children. She attended Grays Harbor Community College in Aberdeen, Washington, where she began to recognize the problems Indian students have in being successful in institutions of higher education. As a result, she developed an Indian program while she attended GHC, and became the director of the program during her junior year, while working toward a B.A. degree at Evergreen State College. After completing her master's degree at Washington State University, Carol accepted a Rockefeller Fellowship in community college administration. This fellowship consisted of an internship as administrative assistant to the president of Central Arizona Community College. During this time she began her doctoral program in higher education administration at the University of Arizona, then transferred to Pennsylvania State University, where she completed her work in 1931. In 1978, Carol accepted a position at Ohio State University in the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, as the director of a national research project on vocational education for American Indians. Carol currently is employed as a Research Specialist at Ohio State University. Her primary interest is in ensuring that Indian people

have every opportunity to meet their social and economic goals in life, whether this involves higher education, vocational/technical education, work experience or expressing the natural talents of the individual.